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The Economic Communities of Edinburgh's August Festivals: An Exclusive 'Global Sense of Place' and an Inclusive 'Local Sense of Space'

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This essay proposes to use a cultural materialist analysis and draws upon Doreen Massey's writings (1991, 1994, 2007, 2012) on place, community and the 'sense of place' in order to explore the imagined theatrical communities of Edinburgh's August Festivals (EAFs). EAFs is used as an umbrella term for the four festivals that take place during that time: the Edinburgh International Festival (EIF), the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, the Free Festival and the Edinburgh International Book Festival. Being an academic and theatre maker, this essay is informed by my own empirical experience as a theatre maker performing at the EAFs in 2013. During this experience I negotiated my belonging and otherness in relation to theatrical communities that were defined not by geography or social relations but by the economy of the EAFs. The four main communal identities of the EAFs were: commodities (e.g. artists), consumers (e.g. audiences), direct profit makers (e.g. promoters, producers, venue owners) and indirect profit makers (e.g. local businesses).

I created the solo show *Caryatid Unplugged* especially for Edinburgh Festival Fringe in August 2013 and I aimed to explore my sense of belonging and otherness in relation to the imagined communities of 'Greekness', European and cosmopolitan. The main themes of the show were informed by my growing fear that, as a result of my uncertain Greek citizenship status after the economic crisis, I would be deported from the UK, and my nostalgia for the Greek Parthenon marbles, which are kept in the British Museum. In the performance, Rita—a Greek woman—and the Caryatid—the feminised marble column from the British museum—meet in a border office in an airport in London where Rita faces deportation because she is a Greek citizen and the Caryatid is not allowed to leave the country because she belongs to the

British Museum. I have written elsewhere (Stamatiou 2017) about how the dramaturgy of the piece and my interaction with the audience allowed me to negotiate my multiple identities: my ‘Greekness’, rooted in my Greek citizenship, my linguistic habitus as a Greek native speaker and my closeness to the Ancient Greek heritage; my Europeaness, rooted in Greece’s membership in the European Economic Area, in my linguistic habitus as a fluent speaker of English, Italian and French and in my sharing of European cultural identities during the EAFs; and finally, my cosmopolitanism, rooted in intercultural consumption, in the idea of an imagined universal community and in the idea of a cosmopolitan democracy, in which each culture has equal symbolic power (see Gilbert and Lo 2007). However, this cultural negotiation that allowed for the specific power-relations of the festival to emerge, did not take place in a vacuum but within the economic negotiations of Edinburgh’s August Festivals. These economic negotiations allowed for the specific experience of the theatre maker to negotiate belonging and otherness within the hybrid economic communities of the EAFs.

Caryatid Unplugged addressed the issue of the show’s material conditions in a self-aware and self-reflective way. It critically reflected on my naivety about the festival before the show went into production. My ensuing disappointment drove me to examine my naivety. The show’s solo format is a primary example of how the material realities of the EAFs determined the performance. Early in the show, John, the puppet immigration officer, says:

If you could afford any more actors, you would have cast a whole bloody Greek chorus. But you can’t! Because you are Greek! This is the new Greek theatre austerity form; Solo performance ahahahaha Where is the bloody chorus, love? Where is the god from the machine, love? You couldn’t even afford some proper lighting for your show! (Stamatiou 2013:2)

Throughout the performance, I lampooned the material inadequacies of the show to enact my identity of the less economically powerful artist. This highlighted a contradiction of the show: I was negotiating my belonging and otherness with the same audience that was consuming me, the artist, as cultural commodity, but only in case they could afford the ticket.

The analysis offers insights into the commodification and otherness of the less powerful participants of the EAFs and poses questions about the commodification of Fringe art. It challenges Massey’s idea of a ‘global sense of place’ (1994: 147) by showing that, during the EAFs, Edinburgh’s attempt to reach out to the global is primarily aimed towards the more powerful individuals of the globe, and that the EAF communities are therefore

exclusive global communities. Consequently, the 'global sense of place' is itself a privilege determined primarily by economic relations and secondarily by space and time. However, I conclude with a positive insight: because my perspective was that of a less powerful artist/participant, in terms of economic, social and cultural capital, for the duration of the festival the EAF communities offered me a spatial and temporal membership to an imagined community defined by the everyday economic interactions, leaving me with a 'local sense of place'. Having said that, I need to clarify that even though artists' power often relates to theatre dichotomies as mainstream vs fringe, commercial vs non-commercial, entertainment vs avant-garde, I consider that the artists themselves do not operate within binaries but rather, they operate within intersecting gamut with mainstream or commercial or entertainment at one end and fringe or non-commercial or avant-garde at the other end of the same intersecting spectrum; and there are as many variations of artists' power in between those ends, as the number of participating artists at the EAFs.

Place, community and communal identities at the EAFs

Massey writes that 'place and community have only rarely been coterminous', and that, to understand a place, one needs to consider the other parts of the world that are connected with it (Massey 1994:147). This relates to the well-known concept of a 'global sense of place'. Edinburgh is not determined by a homogeneous and coherent imagined community; rather, it needs to be considered relationally as a product of its interactions with the rest of the world. Massey writes that interpreting a 'sense of place' as a homogeneous and coherent community can provide 'stability and a source of unproblematical identity', and is 'a form of escapism from the real business of the world' (Massey 1994:151). The communal identities in Edinburgh are multiple and are constructed through the interactions of individuals who are negotiating their belonging and otherness. The economic interactions of individuals at the EAFs create hybrid economic communities.

Four broad communal identities are created through the individuals' economic interactions during the EAFs: commodities (e.g. the artists who are portrayed in posters around the city as products ready for sale), consumers (e.g. audience members who not only consume the events of the festival but are also tourists in the city who consume food, book accommodation and participate in tourist activities), direct profit-makers (e.g. promoters, producers, venue owners, who profit directly from the EAFs) and indirect profit-makers (e.g. local business people who do not profit directly from the EAFs, but whose profits are

maximized by the influx of artists and audiences) ¹. An individual can fluidly move between two or more of these identities. For example, when I was at the EAFs in August 2013, I identified as a commodity (as an artist), a consumer (as an audience member for other shows, a restaurant customer, etc.) and a profit-maker (an entrepreneur who was producing her own show), depending on my particular economic interactions.

Drawing from Benedict Anderson's analysis of the nation as 'an imagined political community' (Anderson 2006:5), I invite the reader to consider the economic communities of the EAFs as also imagined and not real communities. Anderson suggests that 'all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined. Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined' (Anderson 2006:6). Anderson does not imply that the communities that are not face-to-face do not exist, but he suggests that there are different ways in which they are established in the individual's imagination. For example, in 2013 I imagined that there was a community of artists in Edinburgh during the EAFs, to which I wished to belong. The artists were thousands in numbers, and therefore they formed a limited community, and regardless how little or how much power they held, I had a feeling that I would experience in this imagined community what Anderson describes 'a deep, horizontal comradeship' (Anderson 2006:7). This imagined community felt political because it had its own interests and values that differed to the ones of other imagined communities during the EAFs. For example I imagined that there would be a shared deep sense of inclusion and respect for all artists and also a shared artistic identity, and this imagined dynamism was compensating for my material inadequacies.

Although I sometimes identified with other members of the imagined economic community of the artists, members of a community do not all share the same experiences. Massey suggests that to identify a place with a community is a 'misidentification' (Massey 1994:153). Communities can exist without their members being in the same geographical place, and they rarely comprise coherent social groups. Even though individuals belong to the same community and one would expect that they would experience a shared 'sense of place', due to their individual characteristics, like race and gender, they experience a different 'sense of place' (Massey 1994:147). Similarly, the 'sense of place' of commodities, consumers and profit-makers is conditioned by their individual economic interactions. For example, some do well in the EAFs and others do not. When members of the EAFs communities say, 'I did well in Edinburgh²', rather than, 'I did well in the EAFs', they are understood, because the city is identified with the economic interactions that take place during the EAFs.

Massey's idea that members of the same community in the same place can have a different 'sense of place' invites an analysis of the power relations within communities and the different communal identities in a single place. Massey's concept of power geometry enables us to question the idea that capitalism and its developments are sufficient to determine our 'sense of place'. She identifies that individuals' experience is also influenced by their ethnicity, gender and other multiple identities. Power geometry indicates that some people have more power and more control over global flows and movements than others. The fact that my show was about what it means to be a Greek woman in the UK and Europe after the Greek economic crisis worked with and against the material reality of 'not doing well in Edinburgh'. My 'sense of place' immediately related to my perspective of an artist who holds little economic and non-economic capital and I assume that this experience was probably as similar and as different as in the case of all other members of the artists' community.

The power geometry of the ephemeral material community, which is defined by the spatial dimensions of Edinburgh in August, does not grant all of its members the same 'sense of place'. The community also includes local residents but even their 'sense of place' during the EAFs is changing and is related to power deriving from economic interactions. For example, a restaurant can be a hot-spot one year because it is located across the road from a crowded pop-up venue and therefore attracts indirect profits from the EAFs, but not the next year because the pop-up venue might not appear. In the materialist analysis of *Caryatid Unplugged*, I aim to show how I fluidly moved between different communal identities during the EAFs while having little power over the interactions that took place and shaped my identities.

The fantasy of Edinburgh in August

In order to explain to the reader how I developed my specific view of the EAFs' hybrid economic communities, I will use my material experience in relation to the ideological evolution of the EAFs. The Edinburgh International Festival (EIF) was launched after World War II. Its purpose was to be an 'enactment of a European communion' (Steiner in Harvie, 2003:14). I chose to perform *Caryatid Unplugged* at the EAFs not merely to showcase my work but because of EAF's original mission, Edinburgh seemed to be the ideal place to negotiate the Greek/European crisis and the EAFs' relation to the imagined community of Europe. Edinburgh in August was imagined to be a *place-time*³ where an international artist like me would enact their belonging to an international artistic community. For *Caryatid*

Unplugged, Edinburgh functioned as an imaginary symbolic place where I could enact my membership in a European imaginary community from the perspective of the culturally less powerful. The choice of the city was of major importance for such a symbolism. For example, in Athens or London, the political question of ‘Greekness’ and the status of the Parthenon marbles would likely have been overpowered by the importance of the ‘European-ness’ and, by extension, the focus would have been distracted from belonging and otherness of the theatre maker to the one of a cultural agent.

Edinburgh in August becomes, as Massey describes London in *World City*, ‘the whole world in one city’, a ‘meeting place’, ‘open rather than bounded’, ‘hospitable rather than exclusive and excluding’ and ‘ever changing rather than eternal’ (Massey 2007:4). Although there are indications that the EAFs have turned Edinburgh to an international city all year round, the festivals’ intensity and the influx of great numbers of audiences and artists⁴ cause very distinctive hybrid spatial-temporal communities to emerge: the EAFs’ communities. For eleven months, Edinburgh’s flows and connections spread around the world. Commodities, consumers, direct and indirect profit-makers prepare for the EAFs by making shows, business plans, travel plans and other economic arrangements. During August, these flows and connections gather in Edinburgh. A great number of people come to the city and a large number of economic interactions take place. However, the neoliberal community that allows conditional freedom and tolerance for every newcomer or ‘other’ artist, did not fulfil my fantasy of finding a city that was ‘hospitable rather than exclusive and excluding’ (Massey 2007:4).

The specific part of the EAFs that has been traditionally accessible to independent artists like myself is The Edinburgh Festival Fringe (EFF). The EFF arose in response to the EIF’s exclusivity, in terms of both artists and audiences. In her analysis of the aims and objectives of the EIF, Harvie observes that ‘the Festival reproduces this elitism, reinforcing and propagating its imbalances of cultural power and its anti-democratic effects’ (Harvie 2003:13), and suggests that, although the elitism may not have ‘produced’ the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, it certainly ‘provoked’ it (Harvie 2003:14). No matter how romantic the motivation behind the creation of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe was, by 2013 it seemed to have become integral to the assertion and spread of neoliberalism. I experienced this through my participation as an artist/entrepreneur, who produced her own show and was allowed to participate in the competition of attracting audiences with the aim to achieve economic viability at the EAFs. However inclusive this participation was envisaged at the beginning, the difficulty to compete within a market where established artists and producers had been

operating for decades triggered a feeling of intensified economic and cultural powerlessness. My intensified cultural commodification as the ‘other artist’ was my only and necessary ‘selling point’. Interestingly, this commodified ‘otherness’ seemed to hold a positive value because my cultural offer was expected and welcome. However, because I identified as a Greek, a woman, a newcomer and a low-budget performer, I had less of a cultural power within the economic hybrid community of the artists.

The Edinburgh Festival Fringe’s slogan, ‘Defying the norm since 1947’, is indicative of its mission and vision and suggests that the festival is not dependent on the neoliberal market tendencies that became the norm after the 1970s. From my own material experience in 2013, I would argue that the Edinburgh Festival Fringe does not reflect freedom and tolerance for newcomer artists/entrepreneurs but rather leaves them vulnerable to be commodified by the direct profit makers’ who have established specific power circuits. Analysing cultural power from a materialist perspective enabled me to identify how material conditions amplified my risk and vulnerability and defined my belonging and otherness in relation to the EAFs community. As Harvie writes, ‘a cultural materialist analysis concerns itself with material detail to understand not merely what theatre is but more important, what theatre’s political effects are, as well as how they might be changed’ (Harvie 2009: 6). I cannot claim that my material conditions are the same as those of all Fringe artists, but they raise questions about the commodification and power geometry of Fringe art. In *World City*, Massey refers to Ken Livingstone’s commitment to ‘diversity and hospitality’ (Massey 2007:4) in making London a world city. In Edinburgh during the EAFs, diversity and hospitality are highly dependent on the material conditions of the artist.

I performed *Caryatid Unplugged* at the Hill Street theatre in Edinburgh’s new town. It was far from the crowded high street but close to the Book Festival. The theatre is a pop-up venue that does not function as a theatre throughout the rest of the year. Consequently, it did not have an established audience, so it aimed to attract the temporary audiences that visited the EAFs. The venue’s location made it hard for last-minute audiences to find the theatre space. Edinburgh is a crowded city in August, but the Hill Street Solo Theatre Festival took place in a very quiet alley. Even local audiences were not aware of its location.

Although I belonged to the imaginary community of the cultural commodities that are offered for consumption during Edinburgh Festival Fringe, the remote pop-up venue and the solo nature of the festival emphasized my ‘otherness’. In this manner, the Hill Street theatre supported the political nature of *Caryatid Unplugged* as ‘theatre of the margins, [that] continues to signify illegitimacy, a signification many fringe theatres cultivate to create

associations of outsider identity and radicalism’ (Harvie 2009:26). If Edinburgh is a global city, then *Caryatid Unplugged* contributed to the city’s political responsibility. Massey writes that a place needs to ask, and try to answer the question, ‘What does this place stand for?’ (Massey 2007: 10). Massey considers that this question is urgent and necessary for world cities because they have more ‘responsibility in the sense of the magnitude of their effects’ (*ibid*). Although politics did not seem to be a priority in the 2013 EAFs, *Caryatid Unplugged* was still included in the festival and I was allowed to present the politics of an outsider identity. Massey continues that a place’s political responsibility to address the above question is not only for the local state, but also for all those who ‘take part of their identity from the fact that they are here’ (*ibid*). As an individual who desired to be a member of the Edinburgh Fringe artistic community, my exploration of European politics in *Caryatid Unplugged* seemed to be reflective of a political responsibility that the Edinburgh Fringe had little interest in at the time. By presenting a piece of work that posed both direct and indirect political questions, I was asking the Edinburgh Fringe: ‘What does Fringe art stand for?’

My intensified feeling of exclusion made the question ‘What does Fringe art stand for’ more urgent and I wondered whether more Fringe artists had similar experiences. Kane Wills, in reflecting on Massey’s understanding of the politics of place, suggests that, notwithstanding the significance of global flows and connections in constituting places such as Edinburgh, it is important to acknowledge the ‘locally rooted traditions that may provide valuable political and democratic resources’ that can ‘allow collective mobilisation around common interests’ (Wills 2013: 133-145). The creation of the Free Festival, which I will discuss in the next section, derives from a tradition rooted within the EAFs communities – an imaginary place within the city of Edinburgh – to resist exclusion of all kinds, such as taste or financial power.

The economic interactions of *Caryatid Unplugged*

Belonging to the EAFs’ community places particular profit-making expectations on the Fringe artist. Hill Street charged relatively high rent, which affected the price of the tickets. A ticket for *Caryatid Unplugged* – a play by an unknown artist – cost £12, whereas a ticket for Steven Berkoff’s *An Actor’s Lament* cost £20. *Caryatid Unplugged*’s high ticket price excluded many people from the performance – especially young audiences, who otherwise seemed enthusiastic about the show.⁵ Harvie writes that class stratification pervades theatre economies, due to ticket prices and other forms of capital (Harvie 2009: 37).

The ticket price determined the audiences with which I negotiated my identities. This exclusivity made me a cultural commodity only for those who could afford it.

I later discovered that there was a part of the EAFs that aimed for audiences who could afford only certain ticket prices. The Free Festival gives people the opportunity to pay nothing, or as much as they can afford, to see shows. It was started in 2004 in response to the fact that Festival Fringe promoters and venue owners, taking advantage of the popularity of the festival, had raised their prices. The problem is such that a performer can sell all the tickets for all the nights at his or her venue and still make a loss, with the biggest complaint by Fringe-goers being the high price of tickets. Fringe-goers have blamed artists for the high ticket prices, but it is usually the venue that sets the prices, often against the wishes of performers⁶.

The management of the Hill Street theatre was aware of the Free Festival's economic activity and tried to compete with it at the expense of the artists. We were asked to provide special offers and two-for-one tickets one hour before the show, which meant that I had to pay someone £7 per hour to try to sell cheap tickets to last-minute audiences. If any were sold, I would get £6, rather than £12, per ticket. At this price, I was making a loss because of the high rent. According to the Free Festival's website, £6 is a reasonable price for my show:

The more a show costs, the less people are willing to take a chance on it. If a show featuring an unknown artist costs less than £5, you may take a chance on it. If the same show costs over £10, you probably won't. A Fringe needs to be cheap so is accessible, or else people will merely see the performers who are already famous – and they don't need a Fringe! The only shows that put money in the pockets of the artists are usually the shows of the already famous. (The Free Festival 2016)

My position as a Fringe artist seemed less powerful than that of a Free Festival artist, because I was operating within the EAFs market, which is materially challenging for the artists. My romanticism about the Fringe Festival indicated that I was still functioning within a pre-neoliberal rationale, which derived from the time when the Edinburgh Fringe was the 'financially radical choice' and its shows took place outside the economic interactions of the dominant Edinburgh International Festival. The post-1970s neoliberal values that determined Edinburgh Festival Fringe's exclusive economy led to the creation of the Free Festival, which sought to find ways of functioning outside the neoliberal economic framework. The Free Festival was created in reaction to the power dynamics of the Edinburgh Fringe, just as the

Fringe was created in reaction to the power dynamics of the Edinburgh International Festival. The trigger in both cases was the exclusivity of the larger festival, which caused the liberal community to look for ways to restructure the EAFs outside the profit-driven economic market.

This liberal community that functions within the EAFs seems to have supported my function and determination within the EAFs. As stated in the introduction, when I realized that negotiating my belonging from the perspective of a 'less powerful' member of the EAFs community was another determinant political factor that highlighted my 'otherness', I decided to make it integral to *Caryatid Unplugged*, in which I was already expressing my politics of the 'other'. Alison Oddey writes that it is important 'for the deviser to create work that expresses her beliefs and politics and addresses her own needs' Oddey (2009:11-15). *Caryatid Unplugged* originally aimed to express my politics as experienced outside the EAFs but when I faced the challenging material realities of the EAFs the play resulted to be about the inside politics of the EAFs as well.

The play itself was difficult to create, due to my limited budget and problems with my collaborators, but my need to communicate made me determined to complete the project. I did so despite the material resistance. I embedded my determination to finish the project in the script and performance. I had limited time to rehearse in the theatre space before the opening night and the first preview was the second time during which I was rehearsing with the set and props. The first preview was instrumental to how the script would change as a result of incorporating all the extra-theatrical hardships of the show's creation.

After five minutes in the first preview, the paper-lips of the puppet Rita, which also had a mop-body and CDs-eyes, fell off. In an attempt to keep the audiences focused despite the props' failure, I broke off character and within a mixture of worry and auto-sarcasm, I improvised saying: 'oops, Rita needs a make over after the show'. The audience laughed and their laughter was encouraging. Five minutes later and ten minutes in the show, there was a flashback song, a parody of Pulp's song 'Common People' (Stamatiou 2013: 5). During the song, I had to transform the 'puppet theatre stage' into a 'shadow theatre curtain', behind which I would perform Rita's flashback story, and then change the 'shadow theatre curtain' back to the 'puppet theatre stage'. The change proved to be impossible and the poorly made set fell apart. I was singing while struggling with the set and the audience was laughing and this laughter encouraged me to use my failure and transform it into a clown 'slapstick' scene that celebrated failure. During the musical bridge of the song I managed to concentrate and fix the set. I improvised and addressed the audience: 'Low budget stories. This is where

Greek austerity theatre is heading to'. Similar lines were used later in the show, for example when the lipstick I would use to write on my body would break or when I could not find specific parts of the costume. The material realities of the show added an extra layer where I would negotiate with the audience my identity as the artist who lacked economic capital and was challenged by the EAFs' economies and could not foresee how the sharing of culture in the EAFs can be undermining and humiliating for artists of specific capital.

During the twenty-three shows' run at the EAFs, I got used to the dysfunctional set and costumes but I incorporated the humiliating impact of my material inadequacies within the script of the show. During the musical bridge of 'Common People' I added the patter:

Now there is a long musical bridge. Usually we have some Greek people latecomers joining us. Or the set just falls apart. Low budget stories. Lately I am managing the set better and Greek people cannot afford the ticket anyway. So we still have some time for choreography (Stamatiou 2013: 6)

I would finish the musical bridge with a clumsy choreography with the puppets. As Nick Awde observed in his review: 'Gleefully blaming her low-budget show on Greece's economy, Stamatiou flips in and out of physical and clown-style roles, occasionally bursting into song, and creates extra characters from mops – Rita and John' (Awde 2013). I embraced the material conditions of the show to highlight how the material conditions of the EAFs further intensified my feeling of powerlessness and for comic effect. Awde continued: 'It's a little rough and ready, but Stamatiou turns this to her advantage plot-wise, while her infectious delivery wins over the audience' (Awde 2013). Even though the script was already self-aware about how the extra-theatrical economic aspect of the show affected its form and dramaturgy, the theatrical struggle with the poorly made set and costumes was constantly holding a mirror in front of me where I could see the reflection of my minimalist capital. This added to the self-awareness of the show and challenged my own confidence and control over the material that I had created and was performing. The material inadequacies seemed to be challenging on the levels of my own social capital as an artist, my reputation, and made me consider that my choice to perform comedy, which often welcomes failure as a device for comic effect, was coincidentally extremely useful.

The performance was under-rehearsed because some collaborations failed at the last minute and because I had little space. My accommodation was provided through the support of Greek residents of the city. Edinburgh is so crowded in August that I had to rehearse the

show in some unexpected places, such as the bathroom of the house in which I was staying. Conscious that I had just rehearsed my *grand oeuvre* in a bathroom, I observed that I was enacting the communal identity of the powerless who surrenders to the economy of the EAFs in a bathroom both inside and outside the performance space.

Someone with prior experience of the EAFs might wonder why I expected otherwise, but as a romantic newcomer I was unaware of the EAFs' material reality. It was only during the show's production that I realised that Edinburgh Festival Fringe shows are considered successful if they manage to recuperate the money invested into the production. The great influx of people to Edinburgh during the EAFs raises rents, and securing funding seems impossible. When I approached a charity for funding I was told that it would not fund anything political, and through crowdfunding I made barely enough money for the poorly made set and costumes.

It is very difficult to make a profit at the EAFs. Artists usually focus on getting good reviews and meeting producers so they can take their shows to other venues, festivals and tours. Members of the EAFs' communities therefore not only come from around the world, but aim to spread globally in every possible direction. Artists come to the EAFs to promote their work globally. Their economic interactions in Edinburgh are an investment in their global appeal and future profitability. I do not assume that all artists think as such, but the EAFs' communities seem distinctively outward-looking and, at times, vain.

The exclusive 'global sense of space' and the inclusive 'local sense of space'

Nevertheless, even from the perspective of the 'less powerful', I was still able to participate in the EAFs, interact economically and negotiate my communal identities, which is not possible for someone less powerful than the EAFs' 'less powerful'. The fact that the EAFs exclude not only particular artists but particular audiences is at odds with the romanticised idea of the EAFs as somewhere to share culture, and suggests that they are 'overweening, grotesquely outsized and highly commercialized' (Michael Billington in Harvie 2003: 25) and have turned the city of Edinburgh into a 'cultural desert' and a 'shortbread Disneyland' (Irvine Welsh in Harvie 2003: 25). Edinburgh during the festivals offers an amplified 'global sense of space', but only to those who can afford to participate in its economic activities.

The extent to which an artist would afford to participate in the EAFs is immediately linked to their cultural capital, which Pierre Bourdieu has described as the symbolic goods

that an individual has accumulated, which can turn into economic capital (Bourdieu 2003: 64). The international community of artists at the EAFs did not seem to be homogenous as I had imagined it but seemed to be operating within a classification system that is linked to both material and symbolic goods. Both the material and symbolic capital linked to how much exposure in posters, promotional material and theatre reviews the artists would get and this was amplified and determined by the profit-makers of the EAFs. Established artists would use their social capital from previous exposure whereas newcomers would focus on their ‘edgy’, ‘provocative’ and ‘innovative’ work which seemed to be the ‘legitimate’ symbolic capital for a newcomer artist. Both established and newcomers would use their capital with the aim to attract audiences and further invest in their symbolic capital—reputation—and ultimately transform the symbolic capital into economic capital. In the meantime, they would also participate in the EAFs as consumers, choosing to consume what could be called ‘legitimate’ culture that would further amplify their own symbolic capital.

The distribution of the artists’ and festival organizers’ capital was functioning simultaneously locally in the city of Edinburgh and globally. Harvie observes that

our city is local when we act locally, when we share experiences with our neighbours in the streets or in the theatre. It is global when we recognize how it is linked beyond its borders: our neighbours may be immigrants, as we ourselves might be; we hear many languages on its streets; we buy things here from far away – including tickets to international theatre events. In a 1991 article, geographer Doreen Massey has famously called this sense of the global in the local “a global sense of place” (Harvie 2009:74)

During the EAFs, Edinburgh transforms into the ‘city of the festivals’, characterised by pop-up venues and pop-up ‘others’ and identities. It is expected that the pop-up ‘others’ will be in Edinburgh, and they are appreciated for their presence – maybe more because they are cultural commodities who support the city’s economy and less because they share culture. They are allowed for the month to have a sense of belonging in the imaginary EAFs’ communities. Such ‘other’ identities are not obscured by a minority or an inferior status, but function within the ‘neoliberal equality’, which allows them to represent their ‘otherness’ and do their ‘other thing’ for the duration of the EAFs. Their ‘artist/commodity’ communal identity also puts them into the vulnerable position of trading within the established economic circuit of the profit-makers, whereas their ‘consumer’ identity makes them most welcome for both direct and indirect profit makers.

This kind of membership allows for temporary and conditional locality. People become neighbours, friends and co-workers for the month, and this locality slowly unravels as the days pass. Each day feels longer because of its intensity. This extends the duration of a person's locality to the duration of an intense month, which is different to the sense of time outside the festivals. The locals of the 'festival city' include Edinburgh residents and national and international artists and audiences. They might identify themselves as locals, nationals, internationals, immigrants, or foreigners, but within the fluidity and multiplicity of their identities there is a resonance with a cosmopolitan identity that allows them to become members of an exclusive 'universal community'. Edinburgh in August becomes a city where one can have an intense experience of participating in an exclusive international and diverse community.

This community reframes the city in opposition to what Massey and Harvie describe as 'the sense of the global in the local "a global sense of space"' (Harvie 2009:74). Edinburgh in August offers a sense of the local in the global. I would call it 'a local membership sense of space'. This sense of 'local membership' worked with and against the cultural commodification of *Caryatid Unplugged*, and allowed me to negotiate my belonging and otherness in relation to the EAFs' economic communities. It relates not to the durational local that the city of Edinburgh offers but the temporal local that the EAFs communities construct.

Caryatid Unplugged offered its otherness for consumption and contributed to Edinburgh's local economy both directly and indirectly. From my position as an entrepreneur and consumer of both culture at the EAFs and also products and services during my everyday interactions, I not only contributed to the local economy but I also economically contributed to the EAFs and the culture of the city. Due to my consumption in Edinburgh, I was granted temporal locality. From a global perspective, *Caryatid Unplugged* offered an identity representation of a participant with a lower symbolic value and capital. In a certain form it served universal cosmopolitan values of intercultural sharing but it also invited EAFs' hybrid economic communities to reflect on the ways neoliberal power geometries are established and economic interactions commodify Fringe art.

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Notes

¹ Marx would call these communal identities 'personifications of economics relations' (Marx 1977:179)

² The name of the city is used as shorthand for the festivals – especially for the Fringe, rather than the official festival.

³ The concepts of space and place are problematic. It is unnecessary in this essay to clarify their distinctions and slippages. In *Space, Place and Gender*, Massey attempts to formulate concepts of space and place in terms of social relations (Massey 1994: 2). In this essay, place and space are primarily considered in terms of the temporal economic community in Edinburgh during the EAFs in 2013

⁴ In the 2015 Edinburgh Festival Fringe, there were 50,459 performances of 3,314 shows in 313 venues across the city

⁵ A group of students from Taiwan and two young Italian residents of a hostel voluntarily assisted with promoting the show after watching a performance

⁶ You can see more information about The Free Festival at their official website <http://www.freefestival.co.uk/aboutus.asp>.